

Door Knocking Legal Rules

[Essential Political Canvassing Laws For Your Election Campaign \(callhub.io\)](https://callhub.io)

1. As a political canvasser, you are legally allowed to private property and knock on doors.
2. If a property has a 'no trespassing' or 'no canvassers' sign, you cannot enter the property.
3. Canvassing is allowed between 9 am and 9 pm on all seven days of the week, and canvassers cannot be stopped during these hours. However, some states may have shorter timings allotted for canvassing. Do check local regulations.
4. If you are asked to leave, or the resident does not wish to speak with you, you cannot force them to have a conversation or stay on their property.

Does political canvassing count as soliciting? Or is campaigning soliciting?

Often, people mistake political canvassing for soliciting. However, political canvassing has been distinguished as different from commercial solicitation by law.

The First Amendment protects non-commercial speech. That includes discourse that “does more than inform private economic decisions and... provid[e] information about the characteristics and costs of goods and services...”.

Does no soliciting apply to politicians?

Political speech is also a part of this non-commercial speech mentioned above.

So, if a notice board or individual says that solicitors are not allowed in a neighborhood, volunteers can still legally canvass it.

What are the laws regarding political canvassing on private property?

Canvassing is often done on private property—at the doors of individuals. To ensure volunteers are not disobeying political canvassing laws, here's what they should know:

1. Field canvassers are legally allowed to be on private property and knock on doors. **This includes homes or neighborhoods that have “No Soliciting” signs.** But beware, not everyone understands the difference between soliciting and canvassing. You may have to be very patient with such homeowners. If they insist that you are not welcome, it's best not to push your luck.
2. If a property has **“No canvassers” or “No Trespassing” signs, you do not have the right** to knock on that door.
3. You have legal rights to offer campaign literature to voters and supporters.
4. Political canvassers are legally permitted to knock on doors, interact with voters, and distribute literature **without any 'solicitor's permit.'**
5. You are **not required to give prior notice** before canvassing neighborhoods.
6. The Supreme Court has ruled that municipalities cannot restrict canvassing between 9 am and 9 pm on all seven days of the week.

When is it illegal to canvass?

Apart from the laws mentioned above, here are some illegalities in canvassing:

- Volunteers are restricted from canvassing if **“noncommercial advocates” are added to the list of “No Peddlers or No Solicitors”** by a town council. Among others, California, Kansas, and Louisiana include religious and political canvassers in their list of “No solicitors.” To know where your city or state stands on this front, [read this article](#).
- **Is political canvassing trespassing?** You hold the right to enter the property with no obvious sign **only until you are asked to leave**. It can be termed trespassing if you stay on the property even after the owner asks you to leave.
- Submitting false registrations is a felony. If you submit a registration with a false name or without the consent of a voter, you are treading on illegal territory during canvassing efforts.

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Rules for canvassers to ensure legal safety

- Do not push too much if someone expresses they do not wish to be canvassed.
- Ensure your campaign literature has the candidate’s name and office phone number (at least). If not, carry other forms of identification that show you work for a political candidate.
- Always hand over literature during or after your interaction with a voter. Hand it over in person. Do not leave it in their mailbox.
- If a police officer asks you to stop canvassing, explain the nature of your job politely. Local police may not be aware of the laws that let you canvass for votes, even in “no soliciting” neighborhoods. If they insist you stop or warn you of arrest or detention, it’s best to leave the area. Inform your campaign manager immediately.

Political leaflet rules

- Political leaflets and campaign literature often increase staying power. They help in a quick introduction of the candidate and understanding of the campaign.
- Studies have shown that a 3-10 minute interaction between volunteers and voters increases the chances of voter persuasion. Political leaflets can add to that convincing effort.
- So what do political canvassing laws say about campaign literature?
- You can leave leaflets/brochures/forms on doorknobs, between doors, or hand them over in person. **However, putting campaign literature in a mailbox is a federal offense.**
- **Ensure you leave it in a place that is easily visible to the voter and does not fly away or get damaged before the voter sees it.**